

THE
CO-OPERATIVE MAGAZINE.

(TO BE PUBLISHED QUARTERLY.)

No. IX. Vol. 3.]

JULY, 1829.

[PRICE 1s.

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LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY M. SALMON, AT THE MECHANICS' MAGAZINE
OFFICE, 115 FLEET STREET ;

SHERWOOD, GILBERT, AND PIPER, PATERNOSTER-RROW ;

SOLD AT THE OFFICE OF THE LONDON CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY,
JERUSALEM PASSAGE, CLERKENWELL,

(Where Communications for the Editor should be addressed.)

AT THE CO-OPERATIVE STORES OF BRIGHTON AND OF WORTHING ; SUTHERLAND,
CALTON STREET, EDINBURGH ; R. GRIFFIN AND CO., HUTCHINSON STREET,
GLASGOW ; J. LOFTUS, 107, PATRICK STREET, CORK ;
A. M. GRAHAM, COLLEGE GREEN, DUBLIN ;
AND J. MORTIMER, PHILADELPHIA.

Printed by Richard Taylor, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, London.

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No. IX.]

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[Vol. III.]

MISS WRIGHT'S LECTURES.

[We have just received a set of "The Free Enquirer," published at New York, in continuation of the "New Harmony Gazette," and edited by Miss Frances Wright, Mr. Robert Dale Owen, and Mr. Robert L. Jennings.—Miss Wright although obstructed by sects and parties, and by the constituted authorities, has succeeded in delivering her admirable Lectures to crowded assemblies in New York. We copy the following from "The Free Enquirer."]

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,
As delivered in the Park Theatre.

THE circumstances under which I now meet this assemblage of the people of New York, are, I believe, unparalleled in the history of the world. All nations have had their revolutions—all cities, in the hitherto unfortunate annals of the human race, their disturbances, and their disturbers; but truly the sight and the sound is alike novel, of privilege and pretension arraying all the forces of a *would-be* hierarchy and a *would-be* aristocracy, to assassinate the liberties of a free state in the person of a single individual, and to outrage public order and public decency, by ribald slanders and incendiary threats against the reputation and person of a woman.

VOL. III.

Truly the signs are novel which mark this hour, and truly the place assigned to myself by the clamour and artifice of a body of men, trembling for privileges and profits, and eager to drown with noise words which they cannot confute by argument, might cower the strength of one less confident in her cause, or less ardent for its success. But, so surely as I know the strength of the ground which I have assumed, and the weakness of that which *they* have to defend, will I stand fast and stand firm. And did I need in this hour aught beyond or without my own bosom to sustain me, I should find it in my conviction of the destined triumph of the cause I serve, and in the pure decision of wiser and happier generations to come, who (be what it may, the momentary issue of this hour, and its momentary consequences to me) shall write my name and preserve my memory among those of the champions of human liberty and heralds of human improvement.

I know of none, from the modest Socrates and gentle Jesus down to the least or the greatest reformers of our own time, who have remembered the poor, the ignorant, or the oppressed, raised their voice in favour of more equal distributions of knowledge and liberty, or dared to investigate the causes of vice and wretchedness, with a view to their remedy; I know of none, I say, who have not

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been the mark of persecution, drank the poison of calumny, or borne the cross of martyrdom. What better and wiser have endured, I shall not lack courage to meet. Having put my hand to the plough, I will not draw back, nor, having met the challenge so long cast at human nature and human reason, alike by privilege and superstition, will I refuse to meet all hazards in their cause.

I have already pledged myself to show evidence for all my opinions, I pledge myself further to *show all my opinions*; for so truly as I have taken man for my study, and his happiness for my object, do I believe that all my opinions can bring facts to their support, and will, sooner or later, find an echo in every thinking mind and feeling heart.

It hath been asked again and again, amid all the confusion of reports and assertions, threats and declamations, conjured up to affright the timidity of woman, and alarm the protecting tenderness of man, why I do not reply to the slander of enemies, and supply arguments to friends?

If among the present assemblage there be any who have followed all or some of my previous discourses, I would put it to their memory and their reason if I, on those occasions, presented arguments and evidence for the opinions advanced; and if any one of those arguments has been by a single individual refuted, or that evidence, in whole or in part, by one single individual impugned. And I will here call upon you to observe, that my opponents have had the command of the whole press and all the pulpits of this city. To what account have these been turned? To heap on my name and person

outrage and abuse. To libel my audience, intimidate women, attack the interests of men, invoke the interference of the magistracy of the city, and threaten the lessees of this house with "riot, fire, and bloodshed."

My friends, I appeal to your reason, if by resorting to such measures, my opponents have not substantiated their own weakness, and supplied an acknowledgment, that so far as I have spoken they cannot gainsay me?

And now then I will ask, and that rather for the sake of good order and common sense, than for any personal interest of mine, if on the topics I *have* spoken, I have neither outraged your reason nor your feelings, and remain unanswered by my enemies—if it be not at the least probable that on the topics I have *not* spoken, I may be rational also. I have nothing in my head or my heart to hold back from such of my fellow-creatures, as may desire to read either with a view to the eliciting of truth. I have already sketched out to you the subject matter of many future investigations, embracing all our weightiest duties and responsibilities, as reasoning and sentient beings.

But as I have opened our discussions in order, so *in order* must I pursue them, if pursued at all. We cannot speak to all things at once, nor demonstrate the last problem in Euclid ere we have substantiated the first.

In compliance with the wishes of a mass of the citizens, as conveyed to me by individuals, and attested by my own observations of the many disappointed of entrance in our former places of meeting, I have consented to re-deliver my elementary course on

the nature of all knowledge, physical and moral.

Without a thorough understanding of the primary truths which it has been my attempt in this elementary course familiarly to elucidate, the public mind must be unfit for any discussion; therefore it is that I commence with these primary truths; and therefore it is that I shall decline the discussion of all other topics until, our first premises being laid, we are supplied with a standard by which to test all existing opinions and existing practice.

Whenever hereafter I may be called in peace and with seriousness, to deliver my views on any subject of general interest to my fellow-beings, I will meet their wishes. My opinions, whatever they may be, I am not accustomed to *defend*, but I will willingly *explain*; and explain with that simplicity which befits inquiry after truth, and that tenderness to the feelings of others, which I think I am not apt to forget.

Before we open our discussions of the evening, I would suggest to the audience the propriety of bearing in mind the circumstances under which we meet, the former futile attempts to disturb our meetings in the Masonic Hall, and the possible presence of some mistaken and misguided individuals, ready to excite false alarm, and to take advantage of any the least disturbance, with a view to the injury of the cause of human improvement, which we are met to promote, and to the injury of the lessees of the building which we now occupy.

In case of any attempt to disturb our meeting by cries of alarm, I beg the audience to bear in mind that the house is under vigilant and double police.

I shall now then present you with the opening discourse, formerly delivered in the Masonic Hall. And as it will be in matter and words the same, you will judge of the accuracy of the reports presented in your daily papers.

LECTURE I.

On the Nature of Knowledge.

Who among us that hath cast even an occasional and slightly observant glance on the face of society, but must have remarked the differing opinions which distract the human mind; the opposing creeds and systems, each asserting its claim to infallibility, and rallying around its standard pertinacious disciples, enthusiastic proselytes, ardent apologists, fiery combatants, obsequious worshipers, conscientious followers, and devoted martyrs? If we extend our observation over the surface of our globe, and consider its diversified population, however varied in hue and feature, we find it yet more varied in opinions,—in one opinion only invariably agreed, *viz.* that of its infallibility. The worshiper of sculptured idols bows before the image of his hand, and shrinks with unfeigned terror, if a sacrilegious intruder profane the sanctuary of his superstition. The adorer of the bright luminary which marks our days and seasons, sees in the resplendent orb not a link in the vast chain of material existence, but the source of all existence; and so from the most unpretending savage to the most lettered nation of a lettered age, we find *all* shaping their superstitions according to the measure of their ignorance or their knowledge, and each devoutly believing his faith and practice to be the true and the just. Or

let us confine our observation within the limits of the country we inhabit—How varying the creeds arising out of one system of faith! How contradictory the assertions and expectations of sects, all equally positive, and equally, we may presume, conscientious! How conflicting the opinions and feelings of men upon all subjects trivial or important, until we are tempted to exclaim, "Where, then, is right or wrong but in human imagination? and what is truth more than blind opinion?" Few of us prone to study or observation, yet educated after existing methods, but must have asked these questions and halted for a reply.

Should the problem here started be, I say, not impossible, but even difficult of solution, lamentable must be the human condition to the end of time! Had truth no test, no standard, no positive, no tangible existence, behold us then, sold to error, and while to error, to misery, through all the generations of our race! But fortunately the answer is simple; only too simple it would appear for mystery-loving, mystery-seeking man to perceive and acknowledge.

Let not the present audience imagine that I am about to add one more to the already uncountable, unnameable systems, which distract the understandings of men, or to draw yet new doctrines and precepts from the fertile alembic of the human brain. I request you to behold in me an inquirer, not a teacher; one who conceives of truth as a jewel to be found, not to be coined: a treasure to be discovered by observation, and accumulated by careful persevering industry, not invented and manufactured by learned art or aspiring quackery, like the once fashion-

able elixir of immortality and philosopher's stone. My object will be simply to take with you a survey of the field of human inquiry; to ascertain its nature, its extent, its boundaries, its limits; to discover, in the first place, what there is for us to know; secondly, the means we possess for acquiring such knowledge as is possible of attainment; and thirdly, having satisfied ourselves as to what can be known, and as to what we know, to seek in our knowledge the test of our opinions.

It must be admitted, that as all our opinions must rest upon some evidence, real or imagined, so upon the truth or falsehood of the evidence admitted, must rest the truth or falsehood of the opinions based thereupon. It is evident, therefore, that before we can apply any safe or certain test to our opinions, we must well understand the nature of true evidence; before we can reflect, we must have something to reflect upon; before we can think accurately respecting any thing, we must know accurately all relating to it; and wheresoever our knowledge be complete, will our opinion be just. Seeing, then, that just opinions are the result of just knowledge, and perceiving, as we must all perceive, how much confusion arises to society out of the conflicting opinions, which divide alike nations and families into sects and parties, it is equally our interest and our duty to aim at the acquisition of just knowledge, with a view to the formation of just opinions. And as we shall hereafter have occasion to observe, just practice being the result of just opinions, and human happiness being the certain result of just practice, it is equally our interest

and our duty to aim at the formation of just opinions, with a view to the attainment of happiness.

We shall therefore open our investigations by an inquiry into the nature and object of **JUST KNOWLEDGE**; and if we succeed in ascertaining these, we will further examine the causes which at present impede our progress, and the means best calculated at once to remove such impediments, and to advance us in the course which it is our interest to pursue.

If we consider man in comparison with other animals, we find him distinguished by one principle. This principle, which is shared by no other existence within the range of our observation, gives him all his preeminence. It constitutes, indeed, all his excellence. By its neglect or cultivation he remains ignorant and degraded, or becomes intelligent and happy; and as he owes to it all that has elevated him above the brute in past time or at the present, so in it may he find rich hope and promise for the future.

Much does it behove us, then, earnestly to consider this distinguishing principle of our nature. Much does it behove us to understand the fullness of its importance and its power, and to know that as without it we should be as the beasts of the field, so with it we may rise in the scale of being, until every vice which now degrades, every fear which unnerves, and every prejudice which enchains us, shall disappear beneath its influence.

I advert to the simple but all important principle of improvement. Weak as we are, compared to the healthy strength we are conscious would be desirable; ignorant as we are, compared to the

height and breadth and depth of knowledge which extends around us, far as the universal range of matter itself; miserable as we are, compared to the happiness of which we feel ourselves capable; —yet in this living principle we see nothing beyond or above us, nothing to which we or our descendants may not attain, of great, of beautiful, of excellent. But to *feel* the power of this mighty principle, to urge it forward in its course and accelerate the change in our condition which it promises, we must awaken to its observation.

Are we yet awake to this? Do we know what we are, or have we ever asked ourselves what we might be? Are we even desirous of becoming wiser and better and happier? and if desirous, are we earnestly applied to effect the change?

It is probable that some vague desire of advancing in knowledge pervades every bosom. We find everywhere some deference paid to the great principle of our nature, in the growing demand for schools and colleges. We seem to have discovered that the faculties of man demand care for their development; and that, like the marble of the quarry, he must be shaped and polished ere he will present the line of beauty.

But, alas! here is the difficulty. If agreed that something must be done, we see but darkly what that something is. While eager to be doing, we are still in doubt both as to the end to be obtained and the means to be employed. While anxious to learn, we are but too often ignorant of the very nature of knowledge. We are unacquainted with her haunts and her habitation, and seek her where she is not to be found. It may be

useful then, before we engage in the labyrinth of learning, that we examine carefully **WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS.**

If we ask this in our schools, we shall be told that knowledge is an acquaintance with the structure of our own language, a familiarity with foreign, especially with dead languages. We shall moreover hear of history, geography, astronomy, &c. Do we ask the same in our colleges, we shall hear further of law, medicine, surgery, theology, mathematics, chemistry, and philosophy natural and mental: and we shall be further told that when a youth has mastered all these sounding names, and puzzled through all the learning, useful or useless, attached to them—he is well taught and thoroughly educated. It may be so. And yet may he be also very ignorant of what it most imports him to know. Nay, more! in despite of an intimate acquaintance with all the most esteemed branches of knowledge, he may be utterly unacquainted with the object and nature of knowledge itself. Let us then inquire again *what knowledge is.*

Is it not, in the first place, acquaintance with ourselves? and secondly, with all things to which we stand in relation?

How are we to obtain this acquaintance? By observation and patient inquiry.

What are the means we possess for this observation and inquiry?

Our senses; and our faculties, as awakened and improved in and by the exercise of our senses.

These may be all embraced under the generic term **MATTER**, implying the whole of existence within the range of our inspection.

Were we to proceed minutely in our analysis, we should observe that matter, as existing around us, appears under three forms, the **GASEOUS**, the **LIQUID**, and the **SOLID**; and that under one or other of these forms may be accurately classed all that is submitted to our observation—all, in short, that we can see, hear, feel, taste, or smell. But to enter at present into such details would be foreign to our purpose.

I will therefore pass on to observe, that the accurate and patient investigation of matter, in all its subdivisions, together with all its qualities and changes, constitutes a **JUST EDUCATION**. And that in proportion as we ascertain, in the course of investigation, the real qualities and actual changes of matter, together with the judicious application of all things to the use of man, and influence of all occurrences on the happiness of man, so do we acquire **KNOWLEDGE**. In other words, knowledge is an accumulation of facts, and signifies **THINGS KNOWN**. In proportion, therefore, as the sphere of our observation is large, and our investigation of all within that sphere careful, in proportion is our knowledge.

The view of knowledge we have here taken is simple; and it may be observed, that not in this case only, but in all others, accuracy and simplicity go hand in hand. All truth is simple, for truth is only fact. The means of attaining truth are equally simple. We have but to seek and we shall find; to open our eyes and our ears; without prejudice to observe; without fear to listen, and dispassionately to examine, compare, and draw our conclusions.

The field of knowledge is around

and about, and within us. Let us not be alarmed by sounding words, and let us not be *deceived* by them. Let us look to things. It is things which we have to consider. Words are, or, more correctly, should be, only the signs of things. I say they *should be*; for it is a most lamentable truth, that they are now very generally conceived to constitute the very substance of knowledge. Words, indeed, should seem at present contrived rather for the purpose of confusing our ideas, than administering to their distinctness and arrangement. Instead of viewing them as the shadows, we mistake them for the substance; and conceive that in proportion as we enlarge our vocabulary, we multiply our acquirements.

Vain, then, will be the attempt to increase our knowledge, until we understand where we are to look for it, and in what it consists. Here is the first stepping-stone. Let our foot but firmly strike it, and our after progress is easy.

And in what lies the importance of this first step in human knowledge? In the accuracy which it brings to all our ideas. It places us at once on firm ground, introduces us into the field of real inquiry, and lays the rein of the imagination in the hand of the judgement. Difficult were it to exaggerate the importance of the step which involves such consequences. Until we bring accuracy to our thoughts, and, we may add, accuracy to the words employed for their expression—we can make no progress. We may wander, indeed, and most certainly shall wander in various paths; but they will be paths of error. The straight broad road of improvement it will not be ours to tread, until we take heed

unto our feet, and know always whither we are going.

Imagine—and how easy is it to imagine, when we have but to look around us or within ourselves—imagine the confusion of hopes, desires, ambitions, and expectations, with which the scholar enters, and but too often leaves, the halls of science. On entering them he conceives that some mysterious veil, like the screen of the holy of holies, is about to be withdrawn, and that he is to look at things far removed from real life, and raised far above the vulgar apprehension. On leaving them, he has his memory surcharged with a confusion of ideas, and a yet worse confusion of words. He knows, perhaps, the properties of cyphers and of angles; the names and classification of birds, fishes, quadrupeds, insects, and minerals; the chemical affinities of bodies; can measure star from star; analyse invisible substances; detail in chronological order the rise and fall of nations, with their arts, sciences, and sects of philosophy. He can do all this, and more; and yet, perhaps, is there neither arrangement in his knowledge, distinctness in his ideas, nor accuracy in his language. And while possessed of many valuable facts, there is blended with all and with each, a thousand illusions. Thus it is that so many wordy pedants, and hair-brained or shallow disputants, are sent forth from the schools of all countries; while those who do honour to their species, by rendering service in their generation, are most generally what is called self-taught. And the reason of this is evident. Our existing modes of education being equally false and deficient, and the instruction of our schools full of fal-

lacies, theories, and hypotheses, the more regularly a youth is trained in fashionable learning, the more confused is usually his perception of things, and the more prostrated his reason by the dogmatism of teachers, the sophism of words, and the false principles engrafted by means of pretended science, ostentatiously inculcated, or real science erroneously imparted. While on the other hand, a vigorous intellect, if stimulated by fortunate circumstance to inquiry, and left to accumulate information by the efforts of its own industry, though its early progress may be slow, and its aberrations numerous, yet in the free exercise of its powers, is more likely to collect accurate knowledge than those who are methodically fed with learned error and learnedly disguised truth.

I shall have occasion, in a more advanced stage of our inquiries, to examine minutely the errors in the existing mode of instruction, and which are of a nature to perplex the human mind from infancy to age, and to make even learning an additional stumbling-block in the way of knowledge. For the present, I would confine myself to the establishing the simple position, *that all real knowledge is derived from positive sensations.*

In proportion to the number of senses we bring to bear upon an object, is the degree of our acquaintance with that object. Whatever we see and feel, and attentively examine with *all* our senses, we *know*; and respecting the things thus investigated we can afterwards form a correct opinion. Wherever, respecting such things, our opinions are erroneous, it is where our investigation of them has been insufficient, or our recollection of them imperfect; and

the only certain way of rectifying the error, is to refer again to the object itself.

Things which we have not ourselves examined, and occurrences which we have not ourselves witnessed, but which we receive on the attested sensations of others, we may *believe*, but we do not *know*. Now as these two modes of intellectual assent are generally, if not universally, confounded; and, as their accurate distinction is, in its consequences, of immense importance, I shall risk the straining of your attention for a few minutes, while I attempt its elucidation.

To select a familiar, and at the moment a pertinent example. The present audience *know* that an individual is now addressing them, because they see her person and hear her voice. They may *believe* that some other speaker occupies the pulpit of a church in this town, if assured to that effect by a person of ordinary veracity; but let the testimony of that person be as well substantiated in their opinion as possible, the fact received through his reported sensations, they would *believe*; the fact of my presence, admitted upon their own sensations, they will *know*.

My hearers will understand that my object in presenting these definitions, is not to draw a mere verbal distinction, but a distinction between different states of the human mind; the distinction in words only being important, in that it is necessary to a clear understanding of the mental phenomena it is desirable to illustrate.

Did the limits of our present discourse permit such a development, or did I not apprehend to weary the attention, it would not

be difficult to draw the line between knowledge and belief, and again between the different grades of belief, through all the varieties of intellectual assent, from the matter of fact certainty supplied by knowledge, down to the lowest stage of probability, supplied by belief. But having suggested the distinction, I must leave you to draw it for yourselves; requesting you only to observe,—that, as your own positive sensations can alone give you knowledge of a thing, so is your belief of any thing stronger, in proportion as you can more accurately establish, or approach nearer to the sensations of those whose testimony you receive.

Thus, if a friend, or more particularly, if several friends of tried veracity and approved judgement, relate to us a circumstance of which they declare themselves to have been attentive spectators—our belief is of the highest kind. If they relate a circumstance which they shall have received from another, or from other individuals, for whose veracity and judgement they also vouch, our belief, though in a measure accorded, is very considerably weakened; and so on, until after a few more removes from the original sensations of the reported spectators, our belief is reduced to zero.

But further, it is here of importance to observe that belief—that is, the belief of a well-trained mind—can never be accorded to the attested sensations of others, should those attested sensations be contradicted by our own well-established experience, or by the unvarying and agreeing experience of mankind. Thus, should one, or twenty, or a thousand individuals, swear to the fact of having seen a man,

by effort of his unaided volition, raise himself through the air to the top of a steeple in this city, we should believe—what? Not the eccentric occurrence, however attested, but one of two very common occurrences—either that the individuals were seeking to impose upon us, or that their own ignorant credulity had been deceived by false appearances.

But now let us suppose a case very likely to be presented in form of an objection, although in reality capable of furnishing a forcible elucidation of the simple truth we are now attempting to illustrate. Let us suppose that some of our organs should become diseased—those of sight, for instance; and that we should, in consequence, imagine the appearance of an object, not perceptible to more healthy individuals. If the phantasy presented nothing uncommon in any of its parts, or inconsistent with the course of our previous sensations, we should at first undoubtedly yield credence to our eyes; until, in consequence, perhaps, of some incongruity we should be led to appeal to our other senses, when, if they did not concur with the testimony of our vision, we should distinguish the appearance immediately for the effect of disease, and apply ourselves on the instant, to its investigation and remedy.

But again, let us suppose, (a case by no means uncommon in the history of human pathology,) that two of our senses should be diseased—our sight and our hearing; and that we should in consequence see the spectral illusion of a human being; and further imagine such illusion to discourse with us. Our belief would be now strongly accorded to this two-fold

evidence; but we should still have a resource in our sense of touch. Should this last not confirm the evidence supplied by our vision and our hearing, we should suspect, as in the former case, the health of our organs, and consult on the subject with an able physician.

But now let us suppose that *all* the organs of sense, in some individual, should become suddenly diseased, and sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell should *combine* to cheat him into the belief of existences not perceptible to the more healthy sensations of his fellow-creatures. I do not conceive that such an individual, however naturally strong or highly cultivated his judgement, and even supposing his judgement to retain its activity in the midst of the general disorder, could for any length of time struggle with the delusion, but must gradually yield intellectual assent to his diseased sensations, however incongruous these might be, or however at variance with past experience. I conceive that an individual thus diseased in all his organs of sense, must rapidly lose all controul over his reasoning faculties, and present, consequently, to his fellow-creatures, the afflicting spectacle of one labouring under mental insanity.

If we look to the unfortunate maniac, or to the sufferer tossing in fever delirium, we shall perceive how implicit the credence given to his diseased sensations. The phantoms which he hears, and feels, and sees, are all realities to him, and, as realities, govern his thoughts and decide his actions. How, in such cases, does the enlightened physician proceed? He does not argue with the incon-

gruous ideas of his patient, he examines his disordered frame, and as he can restore healthy action to all its parts so does he hope to restore healthy sensations to the body, and accurate ideas to the mind. Here then we see, in sickness as in health, our sensations supplying us with all our intellectual food. In fever they supply us with dreams; in health, if accurately studied, with knowledge.

The object of these observations is to show, that as we can only *know* a thing by its immediate contact with our senses, so is *all knowledge compounded of the accurately observed, accumulated, and agreeing sensations of mankind.*

The field of knowledge, then, we have observed to be the field of nature, or of material existence around and within us. The number of objects comprised within the circle of human observation is so multiplied, and the properties or qualities of these objects so diversified, that with a view to convenient and suitable divisions in the great work of inspecting the whole, and also with a view to the applying more order and method in the arrangement of the facts collated in the wide field of nature, they have been classed under different heads, each of which we may call *a branch of knowledge*, or, more succinctly, *a science.*

Thus: do we consider the various living tribes which people the elements? We class our observations under the head of *NATURAL HISTORY*. Do we direct our attention to the structure and mechanism of their bodies? We designate the results of our inspection under the heads *ANATOMY* and *PHYSIOLOGY*. Do we trace the order of occurrences and appearances in the wide field of

nature? We note them under **NATURAL PHILOSOPHY**. Do we analyse substances and search out their simple elements? **CHEMISTRY**. Do we apply ourselves to the measurement of bodies, or calculate the heights and distances of objects? **GEOMETRY**. And so on through all the range of human observation, extending from the relative position of the heavenly bodies, and accurate calculation of their courses to the uses, habits, structure, and physiology of the delicate plant which carpets our earth.

Now, all the sciences, properly so called, being compounded of facts, ascertained or ascertainable by the sensations of each individual, so all that is not so ascertainable is not **KNOWLEDGE**, only **BELIEF**, and can never constitute for us **MATTER OF FACT CERTAINTY**, only greater or less **PROBABILITY**. In elucidation, we might remark that the facts we glean, in the study of chemistry, supply us with knowledge; those received upon testimony, as in the study of history, supply us with probabilities, or with improbabilities, as it may be, and constitute belief.

Now, again—as our knowledge is supplied by our own individual sensations, and our belief by the attested sensations of others, it is possible, while pretending to communicate knowledge, only to communicate belief. This we know to be the system pursued in all our schools and colleges, where the truths of the most demonstrable sciences are presented under the disguise of oral or written lessons instead of being exposed, in practical illustrations to the eye and the ear, and the touch, in the simple incontrovertible fact. This method, while it tends to hide and perpetuate the errors of teachers,

so does it also inculcate credulity and blind belief in the scholar, and finally establishes the conclusion in the mind, that knowledge is compounded of words, and signs, and intellectual abstractions, instead of facts and human sensations.

Greatly—very greatly to be desired, is a just mode of instruction. It would not only shorten the road of knowledge, it would carpet it with flowers. We should then tread it in childhood with smiles of cheerfulness; and, as we followed its pleasant course, horizon after horizon would open upon us, delighting and improving our minds and feelings, through life, unto our latest hour. But if it is of the first importance to be launched aright in infancy, the moment we distinctly perceive what knowledge is, we may, at any age, start boldly for its attainment.

I have said, we may start *boldly*—ay! and there lies the surety of our success. If we bring not the good courage of minds covetous of truth, and truth only, prepared to hear all things, examine all things, and decide upon all things, according to evidence, we should do more wisely to sit down contented in ignorance, than to bestir ourselves only to reap disappointment. But let us once look around upon this fair material world, as upon the book which it behoves us to read; let us understand, that in this book there are no puzzling mysteries, but a simple train of occurrences, which it imports us to observe, with an endless variety of substances and existences, which it imports us to study—what is there, then, to frighten us? what is there not, rather, to encourage our advance?

Yet how far are we from this simple perception of simple things ! how far from that mental composure which can alone fit us for inquiry ! How prone are we to come to the consideration of every question with heads and hearts preoccupied ! how prone to shrink from any opinion, however reasonable, if it be opposed to any, however unreasonable, of our own ! How disposed are we to judge, in anger, those who call upon us to think, and encourage us to inquire ! To question our prejudices seems nothing less than sacrilege ; to break the chains of our ignorance, nothing short of impiety !

Perhaps at this moment, she who speaks is outraging a prejudice—(shall I be forgiven the word ?) Perhaps, among those who hear me, there are who deem it both a presumption and an impropriety for a woman to reason with her fellow-creatures.

Did I know, of a surety, this prejudice to prevail among my hearers, I should, indeed, be disposed to reason with *them*. I should be tempted to ask, whether Truth had any sex : and I should venture further to ask, whether they count for nothing, for something, or for every thing, the influence of women over the destinies of the human race.

Shall I be forgiven for advertising, most unwillingly, to myself ? Having assumed an unusual place, I feel, that to my audience some explanation is due.

Stimulated in my early youth, by I know not what of pitying sympathy with human suffering, and by I know not what persuasion, that our race was not, of necessity, born to ignorance and its companion, vice, but that it possessed faculties and qualities,

which pointed to virtue and enjoyment ; stimulated, at once, by this pity for the actual condition of man, and this hope of a possible melioration, I applied myself to the discoveries of the causes of the one, and of the means for effecting the other.

I have as little the inclination to obtrude on you the process of investigation and course of observation I followed through the course of an eventful youth, as you would probably have to listen to them. Suffice it, that I have been led to consider the growth of knowledge and the equal distribution of knowledge as the best—may I say, the only means for reforming the condition of mankind. Shall I be accused of presumption for imagining that I could be instrumental in promoting this, as it appears to me, good work. Shall I appear additionally presumptuous for believing that my sex and my situation tend rather to qualify than to incapacitate me for the undertaking ?

So long as the mental and moral instruction of man is left solely in the hands of hired servants of the public—let them be teachers of religion, professors of colleges, authors of books, or editors of journals or periodical publications dependent upon their literary labours for their daily bread, so long shall we hear but half the truth ; and well if we hear so much. Our teachers, political, scientific, moral, or religious, our writers, grave or gay, are *compelled* to administer to our prejudices and to perpetuate our ignorance. They dare not speak that which, by endangering their popularity, would endanger their fortunes. They have to discover not what is true, but what is pa-

latable ; not what will search into the hearts and minds of their hearers, but what will open their purse strings. They have to weigh every sentiment before they hazard it, every word before they pronounce it, lest they wound some cherished vanity or aim at some favourite vice. A familiar instance will bring this home to an American audience.

I have been led to inspect, far and wide, the extensive and beautiful section of this country which is afflicted with slavery. I have heard in the cities, villages, and forests of this afflicted region, religious shepherds of all persuasions haranguing their flocks ; and I have never heard *one* bold enough to comment on the evil which saps the industry, vitiates the morals, and threatens the tranquillity of the country. The reason of this forbearance is evident. The master of the slave is he who pays the preacher, and the preacher must not irritate his paymaster. I would not here be understood to express the opinion, that the preaching of religious teachers against slavery would be desirable. I am convinced of the contrary—convinced that it would be of direful mischief to both parties, the oppressor and the oppressed. To judge from the tone but too generally employed by religious writers in the northern states, where (as denunciation against the vice of the south risks no patronage and wins cheap credit for humanity) negro philanthropy is not so scarce—to judge, I say, from the tone employed by northern religionists, when speaking of their southern neighbours and their national crime and affliction, one must suppose them as little capable of counselling fo-

reign as home offenders—as little capable of advising in wisdom as of judging in mercy or speaking with gentleness. The harshest physician with which I am acquainted is the religious physician. Instead of soothing, he irritates ; instead of convincing, he disgusts ; instead of weighing circumstances, tracing causes, allowing for the bias of early example, the constraining force of implanted prejudice, the absence of every judicious stimulus and the presence of every bad one ; he arraigns, tries, convicts, condemns—himself accuser, jury, judge, and executioner ; nobly immolating interests which are not his, generously commanding sacrifices which he has not to share, indignantly anathematizing crimes which he cannot commit, and virtuously kindling the fires of hell to consume sinners, to whose sins as he is without temptation, so *for* whose sins he is without sympathy. I would not be understood, therefore, as regretting in this matter the supineness of the southern clergy ; I would only point it out to you, desirous that you should observe how well the tribe of Levi know when and where to smite, and when and where to spare !

And though I have quoted an instance more peculiarly familiar to Americans, every country teems with similar examples. The master vice, wherever or whatever it be, is never touched. In licentious aristocracies, or to look no further than the towns and cities of these states, the rich and pampered few are ever spared, or so gently dealt with, as rather agreeably to tickle the ear, than to probe the conscience ; while the crimes of the greatly tempted,

greatly suffering poor, are visited with unrelenting rigour.

Is any discovery made in science, tending to open to us further the book of knowledge, and to purge our minds of superstitious beliefs in occult causes and unsubstantiated creeds,—where has it ever found opposers—or, might we not say, persecutors, even among our hired preachers and licensed teachers of old doctrines and old ways? Is any inquiry instituted into the truth of received opinions and the advantage of existing practice,—who are the last to encourage it? nay, the foremost to cry out “heresy!” and stop the mouth of knowledge? Who but those who live by the ignorance of the age and the intolerance of the hour? Is any improvement suggested in our social arrangements, calculated to equalize property, labour, instruction, and enjoyment; to destroy crime by removing provocation; vice, by removing ignorance; and to build up virtue in the human breast by exchanging the spirit of self abasement for that of self respect,—who are the foremost to treat the suggestions as visionary, the reform as impossible? Even they who live by the fears and the vices of their fellow-creatures; and who obtain their subsistence on earth by opening and shutting the door of heaven.

Nor, as we have seen, are our licensed and pensioned teachers the only individuals interested in disguising the truth. All who write for the public market, all who plead in our courts of law, all who harangue in our halls of legislature, all who are, or who aspire to be, popular servants or popular teachers of the people, all are compelled to the support of

existing opinions, whether right or wrong—all, more or less do, and more or less must, pander to the weaknesses, vices, and prejudices of the public, who pays them with money or applause.

I have said not only that they do, but that they *must*; and most assuredly they must conciliate the popular feeling, or forego the popular favour. Here is intended no satire upon any individuals, professions, nor employments. The object is merely to expose a fact, but a fact highly important to be known; that as, to be popular, men must not speak truths, so when we would hear truths, we must seek them from other mouths and other pens than those which are dependent upon popular patronage, or which are ambitious of popular admiration.

And here, then, is the cause why I have presumed to reason with my fellow-creatures; why, in my earliest years, I devoted myself to the study of their condition, past and present; why I searched into their powers and their capabilities, examined their practice and weighed their opinions; and why, when I found these both wanting, I volunteered to declare it. I believe that I see some truths important for my fellow-beings to know; I feel that I have the courage and the independence to speak that which I believe; and where is the friend to his species that will not say, “*Happy, most happy shall it be for human kind, when all independent individuals, male or female, citizens or foreigners, shall feel the debt of kindness they owe to their fellow-beings, and fearlessly step forth to reveal unbought truths and hazard unpopular opinions.*”

Until this be done, and done

ably, fearlessly, and frequently, the reign of human error must continue ; and, with human error, human vice and human suffering. The advocates of just knowledge must be armed with courage to dare all things, and to bear all things, for the truths they revere ; and to seek, as they may only find, the reward of their exertions in the impression, great or little, slow or rapid, as it may be, which their exertions may produce on public opinion, and through the public opinion, on the public practice.

We have now sufficiently considered, so far as I have found possible in a single discourse on so wide a topic, the main subject of our introductory inquiries : viz. the nature and object of just knowledge. We have examined, also, some of the errors vulgarly entertained on the subject, and many of the impediments which now obstruct our advances in the road of improvement. We have seen that just knowledge is easy of acquirement, but that few are interested in revealing its simple principles ; while many are driven by circumstances to interpret or dissemble them. We have remarked that, to accelerate the progress of our race, two means present themselves ; a just system of education, and a fearless spirit of inquiry ; and that while the former would remove all difficulties from the path of future generations, the latter would place far in advance even the present. We have also observed on the advantage which would accrue to mankind, if all independent individuals would volunteer the task, for which appointed teachers and professional men are now but too frequently unfit, by devoting them-

selves to the promulgation of truth, without regard to fashionable prejudices. I have been led, also, incidentally to advert to the influence exerted over the fortunes of our race by those who are too often overlooked in our social arrangements and in our civil rights—I allude to WOMEN.

Leaving to a future opportunity the more complete development of the important subject, we have this evening approached—the nature of all KNOWLEDGE—as well as the equally important subject of youthful education, I shall, at our next meeting, consider the other two enumerated means of improvement, viz. by FREE INQUIRY. And as this is for us of the present generation the *only* means, so shall I endeavour to show how much it is our interest, and how imperiously it is our duty, to improve it to the uttermost.

It is with delight that I have distinguished, at each successive meeting, the increasing ranks of my own sex. Were the vital principle of human equality universally acknowledged, it would be to my fellow-beings without regard to nation, class, sect, or sex, that I should delight to address myself. But, until equality prevail in condition, opportunity, and instruction, it is every where to the least favoured in these advantages, that I most especially and anxiously incline.

Nor is the ignorance of our sex matter of surprise, when efforts, as violent as unrelaxed, are every where made for its continuance.

It is not as of yore. Eve puts not forth her hand to gather the fair fruit of knowledge. The wily serpent now hath better learned his lesson ; and, to secure his

reign in the garden, beguileth her *not* to eat. Promises, entreaties, threats, tales of wonder, and, alas! tales of horror, are all poured in her tender ears. Above, her agitated fancy hears the voice of a god in thunders; below she sees the yawning pit; and, before, behind, around, a thousand phantoms, conjured from the prolific brain of insatiate priestcraft, confound, alarm, and overwhelm her reason!

Oh! were that worst evil withdrawn which now weighs upon our race, how rapid were its progress in knowledge! Oh! were men—and, yet more, women—absolved from FEAR, how easily and speedily and gloriously would they hold on their course of improvement! The difficulty is not to convince, it is to *win attention*. Could truth only be heard, the conversion of the ignorant were easy. And well do the hired supporters of error understand this fact. Well do they *know*, that if the daughters of the present, and mothers of the future generation were to drink of the living waters of knowledge, their reign would be ended—“their occupation gone.” So well do they know it, that, far from obeying to the letter the command of their spiritual leader, “Be ye fishers of men,” we find them every where *fishers of women*. Their own sex, old and young, they see with indifference swim by their nets; but closely and warily are their meshes laid, to entangle the female of every age.

Fathers and husbands! do ye not also understand this fact? Do ye not see how, in the mental bondage of your wives and fair companions, ye yourselves are bound? Will ye fondly sport

yourselves in your imagined liberty and say, “it matters not if our women be mental slaves.” Will ye pleasure yourselves in the varied paths of knowledge and imagine that women, hoodwinked and unawakened, will make the better servants and the easier playthings? They are greatly in error who so strike the account; as many a bankrupt merchant and sinking mechanic, not to say drowning capitalist, could bear witness. But, setting aside dollars and cents, which men, in their present uncomfortable state of existence, are but too prone exclusively to regard, how many nobler interests of the mind and the heart cry “treason!” to this false calculation?

Tomorrow evening we shall consider these interests, which will naturally present themselves during our investigations on the subject of FREE INQUIRY. In what just knowledge consists we have cursorily examined; to put ourselves in the way of attaining that knowledge, be our next object.

LECTURE II.

On Free Inquiry considered as a Mean for obtaining Just Knowledge.

THE subject we have to examine this evening, is that of free inquiry, considered as a mean for the attainment of just knowledge.

At our last meeting we endeavoured to investigate the nature and object of just knowledge, together with the means proper for its attainment. We discovered these means to be two; a judicious education and a free spirit of inquiry.

From the first and best means, a judicious education, we of the present generation are unfortunately excluded. Wherever our lot may have been cast, or whatever may be our attainments, we must all be conscious, that we are what we are in spite of many disadvantages ; and that however wise or good our vanity may pronounce us to be, we should have been much wiser, and consequently better and happier, had a judicious education more carefully developed our tender faculties, and brought order and accuracy to all our nascent ideas. But the forest is grown ; and, straight or crooked, the trees have to stand pretty much as early circumstances have inclined them. Still, something may be done ; nay ! if we bring fearless and determined spirits to the work, *much* may be done—much for ourselves and every thing for our descendants. It rests with us to command, for the rising generation, that education, whose want we, in our own case, deplore. It rests with us to open with a golden key the gates of just knowledge for our children ; and to marshal them in those smooth, broad, pleasant paths, which we ourselves have never trod. Equally true it is, that we cannot for ourselves command that first, best means, for attaining the first, best good. Our opinions have, unfortunately, to be changed, not simply formed ; our advance in knowledge must involve forgetting as well as acquiring. We have not, in our own minds, to till a virgin soil, but one surcharged with weeds, rank, entangled, and poisonous. Still it is ours to redeem the soil. We may set the edge of our ploughshares, apply them with a steady and nervous hand, and scatter the

good seed in time to reap a harvest.

The second means for the attainment of knowledge is ours, if we choose to exercise it ; that is, if we feel the importance of the object and have courage to employ the means. The importance of the object we *must* feel, if we feel at all, for ourselves or for our race ; if we are not wholly indifferent to the rank we hold in the scale of being ; not wholly indifferent to our moral excellence, to our mental elevation ; to our own peace, to our own utility ; to the liberty and happiness of our species through all the ages of time to come. And if such be the mighty consequences depending on the object, shall we lack the courage to employ the means ? And what means ? to open our eyes and our ears ; to throw wide the gates of our understanding ; to dare the exercise of our intellectual faculties, and to encourage in others, as in ourselves, a habit of accurate and dispassionate investigation.

We have seen, also, that it is not our own improvement merely that must be advanced or impeded according to our courage or timidity, but that of future generations, whose destinies it is ours to influence. Strongly, then, are we pledged to lay aside indolence and fear ; and to engage honestly in the task of weeding out our prejudices and establishing our opinions.

There is a common error that I feel myself called upon to notice ; nor know I the country in which it is more prevalent than in this. Whatever indifference may generally prevail among men, still there are many eager for the acquisition of knowledge ; willing to inquire, and anxious to base their opinions upon correct principles. In the

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curiosity which motives their exertions, however, the vital principle is but too often wanting. They come selfishly, and not generously to the tree of knowledge. They eat, but care not to impart of the fruit to others. Nay, there are who, having leaped the briar fence of prejudice themselves, will heap new thorns in the way of those who would venture the same.

And have Americans yet to learn that the interest of all are compounded of the interests of each? and that he who in pursuing his own advantage, immolates one interest of his fellow-beings, fails in justice as a man, commits treason as a citizen? And oh! what interests so dear as that of mental improvement? Who is without that interest? or of whom is not that interest sacred? Man, woman, child—who has not a claim to the exercise of his reason? or what injustice may compare with that which says to one, “thought is good for thee,” and to another, “knowledge is to thee forbidden.”

But will this imputation startle my hearers? Will they say, America is the home of liberty, and Americans brethren in equality. Is it so? and may we not ask here, as elsewhere, how many are there not anxious to monopolize, but to universalize knowledge? how many that consider their own improvement in relation always with that of their fellow-beings, and who feel the imparting of truth to be not a work of supererogation, but a duty; the withholding it, not a venial omission, but a treachery to the race. Which of us have not seen fathers of families pursuing investigations themselves which they hide from their sons, and more especially from their wives and daughters? As if truth

could be of less importance to the young than to the old; or as if the sex which in all ages has ruled the destinies of the world, could be less worth enlightening than that which only follows its lead!

The observation I have hazarded may require some explanation. Those who arrogate power usually think themselves superior *de facto* and *de jure*. Yet justly might it be made a question whether those who ostensibly govern are not always unconsciously led. Should we examine closely into the state of things, we might find that in all countries the governed decide the destinies of the governors, more than the governors those of the governed; even as the labouring classes influence more directly the fortunes of a nation than does the civil officer, the aspiring statesman, the rich capitalist, or the speculative philosopher.

However novel it may appear, I shall venture the assertion, that until women assume the place in society which good sense and good feeling alike assign to them, human improvement must advance but feebly. It is in vain that we would circumscribe the power of one half of our race, and that half by far the most important and influential. If they exert it not for good, they will for evil; if they advance not knowledge, they will perpetuate ignorance. Let women stand where they may in the scale of improvement, their position decides that of the race. Are they cultivated?—so is society polished and enlightened. Are they ignorant?—so is it gross and insipid. Are they wise?—so is the human condition prosperous. Are they foolish?—so is it unstable and unpromising. Are they free?—so is the human character elevated.

Are they enslaved?—so is the whole race degraded. Oh! that we could learn the advantage of just practice and consistent principles! that we could understand, that every departure from principle, how speciously soever it may appear to administer to our selfish interests, invariably saps their very foundation! that we could learn that what is ruinous to some, is injurious to all; and that whenever we establish our own pretensions upon the sacrificed rights of others, we do in fact impeach our own liberties and lower ourselves in the scale of being!

But to return. It is my object to show, that, before we can engage successfully in the work of inquiry, we must engage in a body; we must engage collectively; as human beings desirous of attaining the highest excellence of which our nature is capable; as children of one family, anxious to discover the true and the useful for the common advantage of all. It is my further object to show that no co-operation in this matter can be effective which does not embrace the two sexes on a footing of equality; and again, that no co-operation in this matter can be effective, which does not embrace human beings on a footing of equality. Is this a republic—a country whose affairs are governed by the public voice—while the public mind is unequally enlightened? Is this a republic, where the interests of the many keep in check those of the few—while the few hold possession of the courts of knowledge, and the many stand as suitors at the door? Is this a republic, where the rights of all are equally respected, the interests of all equally secured, the ambitions of all equally regulated,

the services of all equally rendered? Is this such a republic—while we see endowed colleges for the rich, and barely *common schools* for the poor; while but one drop of coloured blood shall stamp a fellow-creature for a slave, or, at the least, degrade him below sympathy; and while one half of the whole population is left in civil bondage, and, as it were, sentenced to mental imbecility?

Let us pause to inquire if this be consistent with the being of a republic. Without knowledge, could your fathers have conquered liberty? and without knowledge, can you retain it? Equality! where is it, if not in education? Equal rights! they cannot exist without equality of instruction. "All men are born free and equal!" they may be so *born*, but do they so *live*? Are they educated as equals? and, if not, can they be equal? if not equal, can they be free? Do not the rich command instruction? and they who have instruction, must they not possess the power? and when they have the power, will they not exert it in their own favour? I will ask more; I will ask, do they not exert it in their own favour? I will ask if two professions do not now rule the land and its inhabitants? I will ask, whether your legislatures are not governed by lawyers and your households by priests? And I will further ask, whether the deficient instruction of the mass of your population does not give to lawyers their political ascendancy; and whether the ignorance of women be not the cause that your domestic hearths are invaded by priests? Are not these matters of popular interest? matters for popular inquiry? We shall examine tomorrow whether

you have not now in your hands all the means necessary for equalizing instruction, not merely among your children, but yourselves; so far, at least, as to place your liberties beyond risk of attainer. This examination will involve all your interests, national and social. Your political institutions have taken equality for their basis; your declaration of rights, upon which your institutions rest, sets forth this principle as vital and inviolate. Equality is the soul of liberty; there is, in fact, no liberty without it—none that cannot be overthrown by the violence of ignorant anarchy, or sapped by the subtilty of professional craft. That this is the case your reason will admit; that this is the case your feelings *do* admit—even those which are the least amiable and the least praiseworthy. The jealousy betrayed by the uncultivated against those of more polished address and manners, has its source in the beneficial principle to which we advert, however, in this, as in many other cases, misconceived and perverted. Cultivation of mind will ever lighten the countenance and polish the exterior. This external superiority, which is but a faint emanation of the superiority within, vulgar eyes can see, and ignorant jealousy will resent. This, in a republic, leads to brutality; and, in aristocracies where this jealousy is restrained by fear, to servility. Here it will lead the waggoner to dispute the road with a carriage; and in Europe, will make the foot passenger doff his hat to the lordly equipage which spatters him with mud, while there he mutters curses only in his heart. The unreasoning observer will refer the conduct of the first to the republican insti-

tutions—the reflecting observer, to the *anti-republican education*. The instruction befitting free men is that which gives the sun of knowledge to shine on all; and which at once secures the liberties of each individual, and disposes each individual to make a proper use of them.

Equality, then, we have shown to have its seat in the mind. A proper cultivation of the faculties would insure sufficiency of that equality for all the ends of republican government, and for all the modes of social enjoyment. The diversity in the natural powers of different minds, as decided by physical organization, would be then only a source of interest and agreeable variety. All would be capable of appreciating the peculiar powers of each; and each would perceive that his interests, well understood, were in unison with the interests of all. Let us now examine whether liberty, properly interpreted, does not involve, among your inalienable rights as citizens and human beings, the right of equal means of instruction.

Have ye given a pledge, sealed with the blood of your fathers, for the equal rights of all humankind, sheltered within your confines? What means the pledge? or what understand ye by human rights? But understand them as ye will, define them as ye will, how are men to be secured in *any* rights without instruction? how to be secured in the *equal exercise* of those rights without *equality of instruction*? By instruction understand me to mean knowledge—*just knowledge*; not talent, not genius, not inventive mental powers. These will vary in every human being; but knowledge is the same for every mind, and every mind may and

ought to be trained to receive it. If, then, ye have pledged, at each anniversary of your political independence, your lives, properties, and honour to the securing your common liberties, ye have pledged your lives, properties, and honour to the securing *your common instruction*. Or will ye secure the end without securing the means? ye shall do it, when ye reap the harvest without planting the seed.

Oh! were the principle of human liberty understood, how clear would be the principle of human conduct! It would light us unerringly to our duties as citizens. It would light us unerringly to our duties as men. It would lead us aright in every action of our lives, regulate justly every feeling and affection of our hearts, and be to us a rule more unerring than laws, more binding than oaths, more enforcing than penalties. Then would passion yield to reason, selfishness to justice; and the equal rights of others be the sole, but the sure, immutable limit of our own.

As we have somewhat swerved from our leading subject to consider the nature of equality, let us again pause to consider that of liberty. We have seen that they are twin sisters; and so were they viewed by the effulgent mind of JEFFERSON, when from his fearless pen dropped the golden words, "All men are born FREE AND EQUAL:" Those words his fellow citizens and descendants will have interpreted, when they shall have shed on the minds of the rising generation, and as far as possible on their own, the equal effulgence of just knowledge; before which every error in opinion and every vice in practice will fly as the

noxious dews of night before the sun.

Let us, then, pause to consider these immortal words, graven by an immortal pen on the gates of time, "All men are born free and equal."

ALL MEN ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL! That is: *our moral feelings acknowledge it to be just and proper, that we respect those liberties in others, which we lay claim to for ourselves; and that we permit the free agency of every individual, to any extent which violates not the free agency of his fellow-creatures.*

There is but one honest limit to the rights of a sentient being; it is where they touch the rights of another sentient being. Do we exert our own liberties without injury to others—we exert them justly; do we exercise them at the expense of others—unjustly. And in thus doing, we step from the sure platform of liberty upon the uncertain threshold of tyranny. Small is the step; to the unreflecting so imperceptibly small, that they take it every hour of their lives as thoughtlessly as they do it unfeelingly. Whenever we slight, in word or deed, the feelings of a fellow-creature; whenever, in pursuit of our own individual interests, we sacrifice the interests of others; whenever, through our vanity or our selfishness, we interpret our interests unfairly, sink the rights of others in our own, arrogate authority, presume upon advantages of wealth, strength, situation, talent, or instruction; whenever we indulge idle curiosity respecting the private affairs, opinions, and actions of our neighbours; whenever, in short, we forget what in justice is due to others, and equally, what in justice is due to ourselves,—we

sin against liberty, we pass from the rank of freemen to that of tyrants or slaves. Easy it were to enumerate the many laws by which, as citizens, we violate our common liberties; the many regulations, habits, practices, and opinions by which, as human beings, we violate the same. Easy it were! Alas! and say I so? when to enumerate all these, our sins against liberty would be well nigh to enumerate all that we do, and feel, and think, and say! But let us confine ourselves within a familiar though most important example.

Who among us but has had occasion to remark the ill-judged, however well-intentioned government of children by their teachers; and yet more especially, by their parents. In what does this mismanagement originate? In a misconception of the relative position of the parent or guardian and of the child; in a departure, by the parent, from the principle of liberty, in his assumption of rights destructive of those of the child; in his exercise of authority, as by right divine over the judgement, actions, and person of the child; in his forgetfulness of the character of the child, as a human being, born "free and equal among his compeers," that is, having equal claims to the exercise and developement of all his senses, faculties, and powers with those who brought him into existence, and with all sentient beings who tread the earth. Were a child thus viewed by his parent, we should not see him by turns made a plaything and a slave; we should not see him commanded to believe, but encouraged to reason; we should not see him trembling under the rod, nor shrinking from a

frown, but reading the wishes of others in the eye, gathering knowledge wherever he threw his glance, rejoicing in the present hour and treasuring up sources of enjoyment for future years. We should not then see the youth launching into life without compass or quadrant. We should not see him doubting at each emergency how to act, shifting his course with the shifting wind, and at last, making shipwreck of mind and body on the sunken rocks of hazard and dishonest speculation, nor on the foul quicksands of depraving licentiousness.

What, then, has the parent to do, if he would conscientiously discharge that most sacred of all duties, that weightiest of all responsibilities, which ever did or ever will devolve on a human being? What is he to do, who, having brought a creature into existence, endowed with varied faculties, with tender susceptibilities, capable of untold wretchedness or equally of unconceived enjoyment; what is he to do, that he may secure the happiness of that creature, and make the life he has given blessing and blessed, instead of cursing and cursed? What is he to do?—he is to encourage in his child a spirit of inquiry, and equally to encourage it in himself. He is never to advance an opinion without showing the facts upon which it is grounded; he is never to assert a fact, without proving it to be a fact. He is not to teach a code of morals any more than a creed of doctrines; but he is to direct his young charge to observe the consequences of actions on himself and on others; and to judge of the propriety of those actions by their ascertained consequences. He is not to command his feelings

any more than his opinions or his actions ; but he is to assist him in the analysis of his feelings, in the examination of their nature, their tendencies, their effects. Let him do this, and have no anxiety for the result. In the free exercise of his senses, in the fair developement of his faculties, in a course of simple and unrestrained inquiry, he will discover truth, for he will ascertain facts ; he will seize upon virtue, for he will have distinguished beneficial from injurious actions ; he will cultivate kind, generous, just, and honourable feelings, for he will have proved them to contribute to his own happiness and to shed happiness around him.

Who, then, shall say "inquiry is good for him and not good for his children ?" Who shall cast error from himself and allow it to be grafted on the minds he has called into being ? Who shall break the chains of his own ignorance, and fix them, through his descendants, on his race ? But there are some who, as parents, make one step in duty, and halt at the second. We see men who will aid the instruction of their sons, and condemn only their daughters to ignorance. "Our sons," they say, "will have to exercise political rights, may aspire to public offices, may fill some learned profession, may struggle for wealth and acquire it. It is well that we give them a helping hand ; that we assist them to such knowledge as is going, and make them as sharp witted as their neighbours. But for our daughters," they say—if indeed respecting them they say any thing—"for our daughters little trouble or expense is necessary. They can never be *any thing* ; in fact, they are *nothing*. We had best give

them up to their mothers, who may take them to Sunday's preaching ; and with the aid of a little music, a little dancing, and a few fine gowns, fit them out for the market of marriage."

Am I severe ? It is not my intention. I know that I am honest, and I fear that I am correct. Should I offend, however, I may regret, I shall not repent it ; satisfied to incur displeasure, so that I render service.

But to such parents I would observe, that with regard to their sons, as to their daughters, they are about equally mistaken. If it be their duty, as we have seen, to respect in their children the same natural liberties which they cherish for themselves—if it be their duty to aid as guides, not to dictate as teachers, to lend assistance to the reason, not to command its prostration,—then have they nothing to do with the blanks or the prizes in store for them in the wheel of worldly fortune. Let possibilities be what they may in favour of their sons, they have no calculations to make on them. It is not for them to ordain their sons magistrates nor statesmen ; nor yet even lawyers, physicians, or merchants. They have only to improve the one character which they receive at the birth. They have only to consider them as *human beings*, and to insure them the fair and thorough developement of all the faculties, physical, mental, and moral, which distinguish their nature. In like manner, as respects their daughters, they have nothing to do with the injustice of laws, nor the absurdities of society. Their duty is plain, evident, decided. In a daughter they have in charge a human being ; in a son, the same. Let them train

up these human beings, under the expanded wings of liberty. Let them seek for them and with them JUST KNOWLEDGE; encouraging, from the cradle upwards, that useful curiosity which will lead them unbidden in the paths of FREE INQUIRY; and place them safe and superior to the storms of life, in the security of well-regulated, self-possessed minds, well-grounded, well-reasoned, conscientious opinions, and self-approved, consistent practice.

I have as yet, in this important matter, addressed myself only to the reason and moral feelings of my audience; I could speak also to their interests. Easy were it to show, that in proportion as your children are enlightened, will they prove blessings to society and ornaments to their race. But if this be true of all, it is more especially true of the now more neglected half of the species. Were it only in our power to enlighten a part of the rising generation, and should the interests of the whole decide our choice of the portion, it were the females, and not the males, we should select.

When, now a twelvemonth since, the friends of liberty and science pointed out to me, in London, the walls of their rising University, I observed, with a smile, that they were beginning at the wrong end: "Raise such an edifice for your young women, and ye have enlightened the nation." It has already been observed, that women, wherever placed,—however high or low in the scale of cultivation,—hold the destinies of humankind. Men will ever rise or fall to the level of the other sex; and from some causes

in their conformation, we find them, however armed with power or enlightened with knowledge, still held in leading strings even by the least cultivated female. Surely, then, if they knew their interests, they would desire the improvement of those who, if they do not advantage, will injure them; who if they elevate not their minds and meliorate not their hearts, will debase the one and harden the other; and who, if they endanger not existence, most assuredly will dash it with poison. How many, how omnipotent are the interests which engage men to break the mental chains of women! How many, how dear are the interests which engage them to exalt rather than lower their condition, to multiply their solid acquirements, to respect their liberties, to make them their equals, to wish them even their superiors! Let them inquire into these things. Let them examine the relation in which the two sexes stand, and ever must stand, to each other. Let them perceive, that, mutually dependent, they must ever be giving and receiving, or they must be losing;—receiving or losing in knowledge, in virtue, in enjoyment. Let them perceive how immense the loss, or how immense the gain. Let them not imagine that they know aught of the delights which intercourse with the other sex can give, until they have felt the sympathy of mind with mind, and heart with heart; until they bring into that intercourse every affection, every talent, every confidence, every refinement, every respect.

(To be continued)